DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 232 192 CS 207 735

AUTHOR Scott, Patrick
TITLE Research Paradigm Shifts and Their Bibliographic Consequences for English Composition Researchers.
PUB DATE Oct 82
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the University of South Carolina Conference on Education Issues and Research (4th, Columbia, SC, October, 1982).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bibliographies; *Cataloging; *Classification; Indexing; Information Retrieval; Research Needs; *Research Problems; *Writing (Composition); *Writing Research

ABSTRACT

There are four problems in modern composition bibliography that result directly from the continuing research pardigm instability in the field. The first problem is that of definition. Composition is a hybrid, practical sort of field, with very ill-defined and shifting boundaries. The recent extension of composition from "formal writing instruction" towards "writing broadly considered" is making bibliographical decisions about the subject-definition much more difficult than they used to be. The second problem in that of taxonomy and terminology. To have usable, long term cumulative and retrospective bibliographies for composition, bibliographers need some kind of metalanguage for their index terms so that they can classify and make retrievable research conducted within older as well as within the several different recent research paradigms. Third, writing about composition raises problems for academic bibliographers, because they are unused to coping with material that varies so much in publication format and varies also in the purpose and audience for which the writing is intended. The fourth major difficulty lies in the professional segmentation of the field. The proliferation of overlapping associations, conferences, conventions, commissions, interest groups, and organizational letterheads has hindered, not helped, the development of professional coherence among composition researchers. Professional bibliographies must increasingly come to serve as comprehensive repositories of record, not just as short term orientating tools. (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Patrick Scott
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED232192

Patrick Scott
Department of English
University of South Carolina
Columbia, S.C.29208.

RESEARCH PARADIGM SHIFTS AND THEIR BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONSEQUENCES FOR ENGLISH COMPOSITION RESEARCHERS

Introduction

The last fifteen years have seen a great expansion, as well as considerable shift of emphasis and focus, in publication about English composition. On even a cursory count, there are now over two dozen journals regularly publishing material in the field, not to mention increasing numbers of books, essay collections, graduate course-texts and readers, research reports, and seemingly countless conference papers and other documents put into circulation or cold storage through the ERIC system. Yet, as active composition researchers well know, there is no single bibliographic control over this material, nor any very certain means of identifying and retrieving the items already published on a given composition topic.

Recently, with modest financial assistance from the USC Department of English, two of us have been compiling a survey of the existing reference resources in composition and rhetoric.[1] Our

CS 207 735

experience in making that survey has led me to reconsider the general nature of information-retrieval problems in the composition field, and especially to speculate on the relation between recent shifts in composition research paradigms and the bibliographic problems we now confront. We found a surprising number both of bibliographies proper and of orientatory research guides, but they all seem to us to have real limitations; while some are obviously more valuable than others, they are nearly all selective in their coverage, most of them are silent about the kinds of searching from which they were compiled, they are often biased one way or another in their selection of material, and most fundamental of all, there are disturbing gaps in the chronological coverage they provide. The most promising of the modern annual bibliographies, Richard Larson's in College Composition and Communication, seems to have packed up after its 1978 installment (item B.10). In this paper, I want to explore some of the special features of the composition field that have made bibliographic control difficult, for it is only when new researchers, teachers, librarians, or bibliographers, recognize the special nature of composition research and publication that they can begin to get the best out of the present, rather unsatisfactory, reference tools.

What's in the back of my mind, of course, is the much-touted idea, deriving from the historian of science Thomas Kuhn, that composition, and English studies generally, are undergoing a

research paradigm shift, analogous to the shift from Ptolemaic astronomy to Copernican, or from Newtonian physics to Einsteinian.[2] The application of Kuhn to composition has generally been made to emphasize the revolutionary aspect of recent research changes, but what is worth noting in this context is the other side of Kuhn's argument, not about paradigm shift, but about "normal science." By this, Kuhn means the much commoner, if less dramatic, linear and incremental research that is the norm when large numbers of scholars are working within a shared disciplinary tradition, drawing on shared ideas of what constitutes an investigable problem and a credible research methodology. Kuhn's description of "normal science" would imply that the longer-term development of a research discipline requires at least some period of paradigm stabilisation. The four problems I see in modern composition bibliography all result directly from the continuing research paradigm instability in the field.

I. The Problem of Definition

The first problem in composition bibliography is that of definition. Composition is a hybrid, practical sort of field, with very ill-defined and shifting boundaries. As Professor E.D.Hirsch of the University of Virginia points out, in his recent book The Philosophy of Composition, this hybridness is not by itself unusual; mission-oriented fields are commonly, and fruitfully, intellectual hybrids, drawing on material from several

border disciplines.[3] While composition at the college level has usually been taught in English departments, composition researchers and theorists draw heavily also on work in education, linguistics, speech communication, and cognitive psychology.[4] Researchers in historical rhetoric, though traditionally teaching in a department of speech, commonly deal with texts and issues that also concern their colleagues in classics, philosophy, literary theory, and the various modern national literatures. But this euphoric interdisciplinarity raises practical bibliographic difficulties. How, one wonders, can the bibliographer decide whether a linguistics article on language acquisition, or on the grammar of extended discourse, should or should not be included in a composition bibliography ? How does one decide if a monograph on Greek and Latin genre patterns should be considered part of historical rhetoric, classics, or literary theory ? The traditional centre of the composition field has been writing and its teaching at the college and upper high school levels, but the more recent tendency has been to extend out from that centre into the study of elementary, creative, and "real life" writing patterns; if this tendency holds, on what grounds will the future composition bibliographer exclude, say, management analyses of journalists' daily work-patterns, or a textual study of the composition process in a particular literary manuscript ?

Such questions may seem over-dramatic and alarmist. In most practical instances, bibliographers can decide on a pragmatic

basis if some article from, say, cognitive psychology is significantly about writing. The answer to the problem, as I shall suggest in section V below, lies not in a formal or theoretical definition, but composition bibliographers recognizing that their job is to service a specific professional community, not imperialize into the neighbouring subject-areas, where other aids already do the job. My point here is the general one, that the recent extension of "composition" from "formal writing instruction" towards "writing broadly considered" is making bibliographical decisions about the subject-definition much more difficult than they used to be.

II. The Problem of Taxonomy and Terminology

The second problem is that of taxonomy and terminology. Once a bibliographic field gets past a certain size (say, a hundred items annually), and even more as it develops a cumulation of relevant material over a number of years, the researcher needs some kind of subject-division and subject-indexing; an alphabetical arrangement by the contributing scholars' names is of little use if one is tracing scholarship on a particular topic through a bibliography that now contains several thousand items, and the modern reliance on computer databases hasn't eliminated the need for some basic grouping of items in printed form to allow selective browsing topic by topic.

Subject-arrangement in any discipline is much more difficult than proper-name arrangement. Literary scholars may have grown resigned to planning their bibliographic searches by the simple period-and-author's-name arrangement of the MLA International Bibliography, but there is no denying that the MLA arrangement limits and channels the research they typically undertake, away from general questions or cross-period thematic studies towards more straightforward author- and single-period projects. Proper-name arrangement certainly won't work for the composition field. Subject-arrangement is more difficult to do because most research covers or touches on more than one identifiable topic, and most published writing could be placed under more than one subject-heading. When the actual task of classification is based, as it often has to be, on article-titles or on short abstracts, it is inevitably rather arbitrary, though experienced abstracters and generous cross-referencing can help. Such problems exist for subject-arrangement in any field, but composition bibliographers currently have a special problem, because the shifts in research focus and teaching approach over the last fifteen or twenty years have created shifts in the taxonomy and terminology of their field.

It is these problems with shifting subject-boundaries and new terminology that make even the mammoth ERIC database difficult and unreliable as a bibliographic resource in composition. What happens is that new terms get invented, or imported from one of

the border-disciplines. At first the new words aren't recognized as important by the indexers, so good research gets lost or misclassified or neglected. Then, once the new words are adopted, it becomes difficult to do a retrospective search in any real depth, because even where older research had addressed similar or overlapping questions, the old indexes don't use the expected new words, and a kind of bibliographical amnesia sets in.

Some examples may make this clearer. Take, for instance, a researcher on student-writing in non-English Department courses, who will draw a blank when searching any index older than the mid-seventies for the current term, "writing across the curriculum;" yet the idea behind the modern term was in fact being discussed and explored much earlier, in such programs as the experience curricula of the late thirties or the general education movement of the forties. Even in recent years some commentators who are not composition-based have preferred the variant term "writing in the content-areas." Or consider, secondly, the case of someone planning to investigate the way a particular group of writers begin writing, who would nowadays automatically begin a literature-search by checking the terms "pre-writing" (from the mid-sixties) or "invention" (from classical rhetoric, but uncommon till the seventies); these terms just weren't recognized subject-headings or index-terms thirty years ago, when for the same stage in the writing process, the preferred term (and, indeed, the preferred concept) was "planning." One can't assume that, just

because researchers weren't using the same modern terms, they had nothing to say on the general topic.

The irony in this second example is that the modern taxonomy, isolating an initial stage as "pre-writing" or "invention," has become enshrined in the orientatory guides to composition research at just about the same time that a still more recent generation of research, borrowing the protocol-analysis technique from cognitive psychology, has called into question this multi-stage, linear model of the writing process; the new research stresses instead the interrelatedness of creativity, structuring, and text-editing. Just as bibliographers (and text-books) were catching up, the newest research relegates most of what we had come to call pre-writing to the status of pedagogic tool rather than general theory.[5]

It isn't enough, therefore, simply to update index terminology to the preferred terms of a single phase or group in composition research. The best modern composition bibliography is still Gary Tate's Teaching Composition (1974: item B.1), but anyone who has tried to predict which chapter of that admirable work will mention some specific sub-topic in the field knows that composition taxonomy is still very fluid.[6] One might even argue that the most interesting terminology is often the most unstable. If we are to have usable long-term cumulative and retrospective bibliographies for composition, bibliographers need some kind of meta-language for their index-terms so they can classify and make

retrievable research conducted within older as well as within the several different recent research paradigms. Without such stability, subject bibliography becomes very difficult indeed, and bibliographic retrieval becomes limited by a damaging provincialism of time or "school."

III. Problems of Publication Format, Purpose and Intended Audience

Thirdly, writing about composition raises problems for academic bibliographers, because they are unused to coping with material that varies so much in publication format and, a related point, varies also in the purpose and audience for which the writing is intended. Interestingly, Kuhn makes it one of the characteristics of a new research-paradigm that much of the publication in a field appears in textbook form.[7] In a way, this third point, like the first, is caused by disagreements over definition, but instead of being about the definition of the subject-area "composition," it is about the definition of the terms "research" and "publication." Quite apart from overtly educational publishing genres like the textbook or teachers' guides, a lot of article-publishing in composition is designed to disseminate to teachers or fellow-professionals research or ideas originated by someone other than the article-author; one might draw the contrast overschematically by distinguishing between an article communicating "knowledge for someone," and an article contributing to "knowledge in itself." Many composition articles and conference papers (some of my own, for instance) provide practical discussion of classroom strategies, curriculum possibilities, or administrative procedures, and were never intended to offer hard, original research. Quite properly, usefulness or relevance, not great originality, have often been the main editorial criteria for acceptance in even the most

prestigious of composition journals, and academic bibliographers simply are not trained to cope with material that is audience-, rather discipline-, directed.

These varied purposes in writing are paralleled by the frequent use of non-traditional publishing formats - not just books and journal-articles, but large-format illustrated magazines with unusual pagination, mimeoed or offset reports which are put out as from the research group rather than having an ordinary publishing imprint, departmentally-issued quasi-publications intended for local circulation, interest-group and regional newsletters, and so on. In principle, as the ERIC system has shown, there is no reason why these very varied publishing genres should not be bibliographically describable, but an indiscriminate bibliographic egalitarianism rapidly becomes self-defeating, and in any case such publications are very difficult to keep track of; much of this material is literally irretrievable by ordinary bibliographic means, for even the Library of Congress itself has not traditionally bothered to catalogue most textbooks or government-sponsored research-reports.

Some commentators have advocated tackling this problem by being more rigid over what will count, bibliographically, as "publication." Professor Hirsch, for example, worries that, with the increase in the number of publishing outlets for composition, the situation is becoming "as chaotic as the California gold-rush; good work will be as hard to find as nuggets in a well-panned

stream."[8] It is tempting also for composition specialists, who know that there are plenty of nuggets there, to try and improve the academic recognition of their field by making the abundant mud and gravel bibliographically nonexistent. Larson, for instance, in the mid-seventies, chose to exclude from his annual bibliography, all "textbooks, reviews of books, items dealing with the preparation of teachers, pieces that deal mainly with the administration of programs in composition, pieces that argue well-known issues in familiar ways, and pieces that add little to previous knowledge."[9] The continuing Dieterich bibliography, in Research in the Teaching of English, is more generous than Larson on the publication-formats it will admit, including both dissertations and ERIC documents, but Dieterich is pretty rigid in limiting its coverage by research approach, admitting only items based on new empirical investigation, reviews of such empirical work, and work in that general pedagogy-oriented tradition.

This kind of toughness may meet a short-term need in the profession, by allowing solid research to stand out more clearly, but both Larson and the RTE bibliography lose as well as gain from these tough criteria. Inevitably, individual users, especially the authors of excluded articles, have disagreed over specific omissions. It is the general biases that matter most, however. Larson excluded some very important review-essays, practical papers, and short think-pieces on perennial issues, the sort of things researchers read at the time of publication but can't lay

their hand on a year or two later when they need them. The RTE focus on empirical research-reports allows only spotty coverage to theoretical and non-pedagogic discussions of writing. Neither Larson nor Dieterich admit textbooks, and of course many composition textbooks are derivative; nonetheless, most years a few are genuinely important in their approach or in the way they present some particular topic, and there are certainly non-research purposes where one needs bibliographic control over new textbook publication.[10]

But even beyond this question of bias in the selection policies, there is the question of predictability in coverage: because both serial composition bibliographies are selective, researchers starting a new project cannot have any confidence that they really know of all the previous work on their topic. The user can't predict that the lists contain everything relevant that has been written. For instance, in 1980-81, at least three articles were published surveying the research about the influence of formal grammar instruction on writing development; none of the three gave even a footnote reference to a similar 1977 discussion, even though it had been published in one of the senior composition journals. I checked back and discovered that it had been omitted from Larson's 1977 bibliography (presumably because the topic was"well-known"); in the RTE bibliography, it had been entered under a general category on research surveys for college-level English along with bibliographies, and so could easily have been overlooked by someone chasing material on grammar.[11]

Selective bibliographies certainly have their uses, especially for busy teachers or for beginning graduate students, and there is a continuing need for up-to-date "field guides" that can introduce newcomers to the major books, articles and reports. Those committing themselves to longer-term research, however, and those aiming at serious publication, must be able to rely on the field-bibliographies covering all but the most ephemeral of previously-published work. Because they have caused bibliographers to impose a premature selectivity in the annual serials, the unusually varied format and diverse writing aims of composition publication must be counted among the factors that hinder adequate information retrieval systems for composition researchers.

IV. Problems stemming from Professional Segmentation

Fourthly, and more tentatively, I would like to suggest that a major difficulty for composition bibliography lies in the professional segmentation of the field. I'm not referring here to the problem of intellectual or disciplinary departmentalism, or to the need to develop links with linguistics, psychology, education, or whatever. What interests me are the bibliographical consequences of the multifarious professional organizations in the field. To some degree, the problems I have been sketching so far apply to many academic fields, yet they have not everywhere so noticeably hindered bibliographical developments. One might ask,

for instance, no more than half-satirically, whether bibliographers of literary studies or of history have clear, easily-applicable definitions of their subjects to work with. The answer, of course, is that they don't -- that literary studies and history are "defined" bibliographically as "what literary scholars (or historians) write," and more especially as "what the editors of recognizably literary (or historical) journals have accepted for publication." Bibliographies have conventionally worked, not from abstract subject-definitions, but from tacit social bases - the recognition of certain journals and problems and kinds of authors as belonging to a field. Established organizations of research-oriented professionals are essential mediators of that recognition.

In literary studies, for example, the language-and-literary-history coalition of the Modern Humanities Research Association in Britain produced a fairly-comprehensive and useful annual bibliography from the 1920s on, while its American counterpart, the Modern Language Association, has produced since its improvement in the early 50s an astonishingly inclusive, if not complete, annual bibliography covering an incredible range of almost-unrelated research fields, simply because the professional organization itself was strong and strongly research-oriented. It's not a question simply of academic status, as some might suspect, for the other orphan of the twentieth-century English department, Speech or Speech Communication, has had its own solid

and usable annual bibliographies since the 1940s, again because anyone seriously working in the field identified with one professional organization.

In composition, on the other hand, the sheer number of professional organizations baffles a newcomer -- not just the special divisions and offices in the MLA, but much more significantly the 4 Cs, the NCTE College Section and Secondary Sections and their regional affiliates, the CEA and its regional affiliates, the Rhetoric Society of America, the International Society for the History of Rhetoric, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the Writing Centers Association, in effect the modern ADE --, and this list excludes education and school-oriented organizations like the Council on English Education or the National Conference on Research in English. All these groups serve real professional needs, but from the bibliographer's viewpoint, the problem with all of them except the two Rhetoric societies is that they have a membership generally more concerned with practical problems than with facilitating long-term research. Fragmented interest groups can do a great deal in preparing orientatory and selective bibliographies, as the NCTE certainly has done over the years, but each group has its own emphasis, terminology, and concerns, and none can afford to search systematically journals outside the obvious few. Adequately inclusive annual bibliographical coverage, however, cannot be be accomplished by a few enthusiastic individuals, or produced on the

proceeds of sales to library reference departments alone; it takes money, and paid staff, generous computer-access, and a large print-run, and the kind of continuity that outlasts the commitment of individual editors. All these can only realistically be provided by a large research-oriented professional organization prepared to use its dues both for upfront production costs each year, and prepared also to buy a copy every year for every member. I don't know how the NCTE and the 4 Cs, as affiliated and overlapping organizations, divide up their finances, but it seems to me as an outsider that one or other should have underwritten bibliographical services long ago.[12] Failing that, there would seem no reason why the MLA bibliographers should not issue a fourth section of their annual bibliography covering composition, for the task is still of quite manageable scale for a set-up already processing several thousand journals a year. One might conclude that the proliferation of overlapping associations, conferences, conventions, commissions, interest-groups, and organizational letterheads has hindered, not helped, the development of professional coherence among composition researchers, and so has been one factor obstructing the most basic of professional services, a research bibliography.

V. Some Prospects for the Future

This paper has been chiefly concerned to describe and clarify four particular, if not unique, bibliographical problems of the

composition field -- problems of definition and relationship with border-disciplines, problems of terminology and taxonomy, problems with publication format and intention, and problems stemming from the structure of professional organization in the field. In the middle-term, two projects-in-progress are likely to improve the situation. Professor Paul T. Bryant, of Colorado State University, is editing a retrospective bibliography for composition research from 1900 to 1973, which should be extremely valuable in bridging the disjunction between older educational research and the more recent research done under the banner and terminology of modern composition.[13] Professor Erika Lindemann, of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is planning a new annual composition bibliography in yearbook form, to be published by Longmans of New York. Both these projects will be practically-oriented, generously selective, bibliographies, making practical responses to the rather intractably theoretical problems that I have been sketching out. For work in historical rhetoric from before 1900, we already have Winifred Horner's bibliography, published in 1980. One sincerely hopes that something will get done soon about an adequately-indexed bibliography for the years 1974 to 1980 or so, between Bryant's cut-off and Lindemann's starting-date; much could be accomplished just by merging, re-classifying, adding to, and indexing Larson's and Dieterich's lists. Serious practical projects like these, by practising composition researchers, seem likely to make a major improvement in reference help for the field during the next few years.

For the longer term, how will composition bibliographers overcome the underlying problems? First, they will increasingly recognize the principle put forward throughout this paper, and especially in the fourth section -- that an academic field is socially, not logically, defined, and that a composition bibliography only becomes possible as the field itself regains some social coherence and research paradigm stability. Once given such a recognition, and the bibliographical projects already underway are likely to encourage such a period of stabilisation, long-term bibliographical plans raise far fewer difficulties. Essentially, a composition bibliography must cover the work done by all those identified with the composition professional community. It can't afford to be divisively purist about work in its own field, anymore than it can afford to be grandiosely imperialistic about neighbouring fields. Ideally, one modestly-funded center would enter into a computer data-base comprehensive coverage of all articles and books reviewed in a stated list of composition journals (see Section C of our guide). To these would be added all composition-related articles and book-titles from a similar list of more general journals regularly publishing composition-related material. Further, entries would be added for all books that had been assigned a specified range of composition-related Library of Congress cataloguing-in-publication numbers or cross-entries. The central coverage given, therefore, for articles and books alike, would not depend on the ad hoc judgment of individual bibliographers or on the prescriptive research

paradigms of a single school or generation. Whether or not this ideal pattern is followed, bibliographers are likely to provide increasingly predictable coverage, routinely entering the standard journals, and so devolving the definition problem, about what makes an article "composition" and "research," out to a pluralist group of journal editors and reviewers. The core of future composition bibliographies will, I believe, offer users predictable coverage of specified professional sources, rather than unpredictable, if well-informed and well-intended, selective coverage, as at present.

What will get included beyond this core will depend mostly on finance and on the extent to which compositionists remain avowedly interdisciplinary. As long as composition researchers expect to raid over into bordering disciplines, they will expect to search the relevant specialist bibliographies for themselves, and composition bibliographies need not do the job for them; but if composition maintains its present trend to disciplinary independence, then a second kind of coverage needs to be added to the basic core. Again, I would argue, this should be systematic coverage, not well-intended selection. It is relatively simple, after all, to pull from the existing data-bases in linguistics, psychology, and education all items with "writing," "composition," or similar terms in their titles, abstracts, or among their index-descriptors, editing out only the most obviously irrelevant. Such a search system would be not only easier, but bibliographically

better, than seeking to include, for instance, a selective list of 'the year's most significant articles in cognitive psycholcgy."

Thirdly, because of the problem of subject-taxonomy, future composition bibliographies will need to provide abstracts and cross-indexing for every item. It is likely that as researchers rely increasingly on computer data-base searches, article-authors will become better at making their titles include useful and searchable keywords, rather than cutesy colloquialisms, but even so abstractswill provide much better bases for multi-term searching. I believe that composition researchers would be greatly helped, tco, if bibliographical entries were coded according to the apparent purpose or audience of each piece, the publishing format, and the educational level with which it deals, and such coding would allcw selective print-form versions to be produced, very easily, -- for the different constituencies in the NCTE, for instance--, while still maintaining the economies of scale and professional usefulness of a basic comprehensive database.

I don't foresee this "ideal" composition bibliography as a brand-new, fanfare-and-trumpets revolution or apocalypse, but rather as the Platonic idea towards which the bibliographies already in progress and projected are likely to approximate. There will, I am certain, continue to be new selective and introductory bibliographies, and these have their place, but the professional bibliographies must increasingly come to serve as

comprehensive repositories of record, not just as short-term orientatory tools.

VI. Some Precautions for the Present.

In the meantime, however, composition researchers and the growing number of graduate students in the field have to get on with the job. We can't simply put off everything until the bibliographical millenium, but neither can we rest content with inadequate, unprofessional literature-searches, especially if we are committing our time, and other people's money, to a long-term project. For the immediate future, we need precautionary strategies that will help circumvent the worst problems. First, one must recognize the difference of status and purpose between the many selective or special-topic bibliographies and more comprehensive bibliographical controls. There are real snares for the unwary if they rely too heavily on somebody else's selection of research. Because the existing bibliographies are all, in some degree, selective, it needs to become routine to search several different serial bibliographies, rather than resting content with a single favorite source. We need to learn, probably by hard experience, which bibliographies can be relied upon for systematic coverage of which journals, and which only pick up the odd interesting article. We need to be more aware of the biases in research approach or pedagogic preference that underlie the various reference sources. In composition, as in other reference fields, we are often channelled by the very taxonomy and coverage-base into one particular research tradition, and cut off from others, and we need, here as in other disciplines, to come to

terms with this channelling effect. We need to learn the possibilities and limitations of computer data-base subject-searching.[14] We need to understand the sophistication, search-techniques and index-vocabularies, of reference sources in such better-bibliographed border disciplines as linguistics, psychology, literary history, classics and education.

Above all, it needs to become more widely recognized that those choosing composition as a graduate field need some systematic instruction in its special bibliographic difficulties.[15] It is not enough to hand a student the Tate book and point them towards RTE, the Education Index, or an ERIC terminal. Changes in research focus, and the explosion of published work on composition, have complicated, and perhaps temporarily disrupted, any easy information retrieval in the field. To play with Hirsch's glum metaphor, composition research can be not only a gold-field, but a minefield, and the most basic form of scholarly skill is finding what has already been said on one's topic. If anything much worthwhile is to get done, the increasing numbers of graduate students and teachers who are joining the gold-rush need more help with the rudiments of bibliographical prospecting.

Endnotes

[1] Patrick Scott and Bruce Castner, Selected Reference Sources in Rhetoric and Composition (Columbia, S.C.: Department of English, U.S.C., 1982); item numbers in the text refer to entries in this pamphlet. I should like to thank Professor William B.McColly and Bruce Castner for commenting on this a draft of this article.

[2] Cf. Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962); the idea has been applied to recent changes in composition research by Richard Young, "Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention," in Research in Composing, ed. Charles R.Cooper and Lee Odell (Urbana, Ill.; NCTE, 1978), pp.29-47, and by Maxine Hairston, "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution the Teaching of Writing," College Composition and Communication, 33 (February 1982), 76-88.

[3] E.D.Hirsch, The Philosophy of Composition (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), p.170.

[4] See, e.g., Odell and Cooper, as in n.2 above, or the wide-ranging graduate program described by Joseph Comprone, in Journal of Basic Writing, 3:2 (Spring-Summer 1981), 23-45.

[5] See, e.g., Linda Flower and John R.Hayes, "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Situation," College Composition and Communication, 31 (February 1981), 21-32, and the same authors' "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing," ibid., 32 (December 1981), 365-387, esp. pp.367-369.

[6] Some help to using Tate has now been provided by Barbara McDaniel, Index to "Teaching Composition" (Blaine, WA.; Verlaine Books, 1982), which gives indexes of Names, Titles, and Subjects.

[7] Kuhn, p.136.

[8] Hirsch, p.169.

[9] Larson's annual headnote, as in, e.g., College Composition and Communication 30 (May 1979), 196.

[10] There has been a separate annotated bibliography of writing texts by Shannon Burns and others (1976: item B.5), and there is a new annual checklist of textbooks by Joe Trimmer in WPA: Writing Program Administration.

[11] Janice Neulieb, "The Relation of Formal Grammar to Composition," College Composition and Communication 28:3 (October 1977), 247-250, is not cited by William G.Clark, "Formal Grammar: Does it help improve writing ?," Teaching English in the Two-Year College 7:2 (Winter 1981), 133-138; P.F.Bassett, "English Grammar: can we afford not to teach it ?", NASSP Bulletin, 64 (October 1980), 55-63; or Peter M.Schiff, "But they make me use that grammar text !", English Journal, 69 (December 1980), 23-25. It is perhaps more understandable that Neulieb was overlooked also by Thomas F.Newkirk, and Ian F.Fraser and Lynda M.Hobson, in their similar articles, in English Journal, 64 (December 1978), 46-48 49-54.

[12] The 4 Cs had a special session at its Spring 1981 convention under the title "Towards a Bibliography for the Profession," and a Commission was appointed to consider the problem, but this "sponsorship" did not appear to include any

major or longterm financial commitment.

[13] Bryant was one of the first to comment on bibliographical needs in the field, in his paper "A Brand New World Every Morning," College Composition and Communication 25 (February 1974), 30-35.

[14] Cf. Scott and Castner, Selected Reference Sources, pp.24-27. I am grateful to Jane Thesing, of Thomas Cooper Library, USC, for discussing computer-searching with us.

[15] On the way such instruction might be handled, see Patrick Scott and Bruce Castner, "The Bibliography Instructor and Composition Research"(forthcoming).